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SIPDIS

DRL/ILCSR FOR DANG  
NSC STAFF FOR KUMAR

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TAGS: [ELAB](#) [ECON](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [EG](#)  
SUBJECT: MINERS CLASH WITH POLICE IN UPPER EGYPT

REF: A. CAIRO 775  
[1](#)B. 08 CAIRO 1643

Classified By: Economic-Political Minister-Counselor  
Donald A. Blome for reason 1.4 (d).

[1](#)1. (C) On July 16, in the most recent example of Egypt's ongoing wave of labor strikes and demonstrations (ref A), quarry workers and owners protesting a local government imposed tariff on cut stone clashed with police in the Upper Egyptian city of Minya. According to local media reports, a policeman was killed in the violence. Security officials subsequently arrested 53 demonstrators. A Minya-based labor rights activist, Maher Bushra, told us that after the protest the local government informed demonstration leaders that it would delay the imposition of the tariff. Bushra reported that the situation in Minya is now calm.

[1](#)2. (C) The Minya region is the center of Egypt's limestone quarrying industry, with hundreds of quarries, many small and unlicensed, clustered on the East Bank of the Nile (ref B). The quarries are notorious for employing children and a number of NGOs work with quarry owners and the local government to improve the child workers' situation. Bushra is concerned that the unrest and police crackdown could interfere with the work of these NGOs.

[1](#)3. (C) Comment: Of late, the GoE has taken a relatively light hand with labor protesters, generally not responding with violence or arrests to purely economic demands. Labor activists, including Karim Saber of the well-regarded Land Center for Human Rights, were surprised by Minya security forces' harsh reaction to the miners' protest. While the violence in Minya may be a purely local phenomena, Egyptian labor activists, who regard the GoE's recent tolerance towards strikers as a significant step forward for workers' rights, will be watching closely for any signs of GoE backtracking.  
Tueller